

now even many of those who initially opposed the surge acknowledge that it is achieving results. It is time for Members of Congress to meet their responsibility to our men and women in uniform, and they should stay in session until they pass these emergency funds for our troops.

Second, Congress needs to make sure our intelligence professionals can continue to monitor terrorist communications. In August, Congress passed legislation to help modernize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. That bill closed critical intelligence gaps, allowing us to collect important foreign intelligence information about terrorist plots. The problem is, the new law expires on February 1st, while the threat from the terrorists does not expire.

The Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, has warned that unless the FISA reforms in the act are made permanent, our national security professionals will lose critical tools they need to protect our country. Instead of listening to the judgment of Director McConnell, some in Congress now want to restrict the intelligence tools that help keep the American people safe. They are blocking efforts to provide meaningful liability protection to those companies now facing multibillion dollar lawsuits only because they are believed to have assisted in our efforts to defend our Nation following the September the 11th attacks. Congress must stop this obstruction and make certain our national security professionals do not lose a critical tool for keeping our country safe.

Third, Congress needs to act immediately to prevent the Alternative Minimum Tax from hitting more Americans this year. The AMT was enacted in 1969 to ensure that a few hundred wealthy individuals paid their fair share of taxes. But when Congress passed the AMT, it was not indexed for inflation. As a result, the AMT's higher tax burden is being imposed on more and more middle class families.

Last month, Treasury Secretary Paulson wrote a letter to Members of Congress warning them about this: that if they put off an AMT fix, it could delay the delivery of about \$75 billion worth of tax refund checks. Yet instead of listening to Secretary Paulson's warning, Congress continues to delay action.

The longer Congress delays action, the longer Americans will wait—likely wait to get their tax refund checks next year.

If Congress fails to act, as many as 25 million Americans would be subject to AMT. On average, these taxpayers—many of them middle class families—would have to send an extra \$2,000 to the IRS next April. At a time when many Americans are struggling with home mortgages and health care costs, the last thing they need is for Congress to stick them with an additional tax increase.

Finally, Congress has important work to do on the Federal budget. One of the Congress's most basic duties is to fund the day-to-day operations of the Federal Government. Yet only 1 of the 12 spending bills has made it into law. Congressional leaders are now talking about piling the remaining bills into one monster piece of legislation, which they will load up with billions of dollars in earmarks and wasteful spending. Now is not the time to burden our economy with wasteful Washington spending that will lead to higher taxes. Congressional leaders need to do their job and pass the remaining spending bills in a fiscally responsible way. And if they send me an irresponsible spending bill, I will veto it.

The end of 2007 is approaching fast, and the new Congress has little to show for it. I call on Members to use the time left to support our troops and to protect our citizens, prevent harmful tax increases, and responsibly fund our Government.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:57 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Remarks at the Children's Holiday Reception

December 3, 2007

Thank you all for coming. Welcome to the White House. I've got two jobs. One is to introduce you to my wife, Laura, and two is to tell you how much we admire your moms and dads, how much we appreciate their service to our country.

I know it's hard when you have a loved one, somebody you love a lot, not going to be around for the Christmas season. And one way we hope to help you through the moment is to invite you here to the White House for what's going to be a pretty special moment.

So I want to say thank you. When you talk to your mom or dad or e-mail your mom or dad, you make sure you tell them that President and Mrs. Bush are sure proud of their contributions to our country.

And so with that, I'm going to do my second job, which is to bring to the podium here my wife, First Lady Laura Bush.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the U.S.-Palestinian Public-Private Partnership

December 3, 2007

It's been my honor and the honor of key members of my administration to welcome Minister Abu Daqqa here. She's the Minister of Youth for the Palestinians. I also want to welcome friends, business leaders, community activists who are committed to a public-private partnership to help the Palestinian Government provide hope, particularly for the young—she's the Minister of Youth.

And so Walter Isaacson and the other leaders here have outlined a strategy to us as to how we can make sure our USAID money and our OPIC money can be leveraged with private participation to help the Palestinians develop a civil society that is a key part of making sure that the vision of two states living side by side in peace becomes a reality.

And so Madam Minister, you're seeing the best of America. You're seeing private citizens who care deeply about peace come together with a Government that is dedicated to a two-state solution to develop a strategy to help you succeed.

And one of the things that interests me a lot is the fact that we are going to help the Palestinians develop youth centers, places where young Palestinians can come

and learn new technical skills or language skills or have mentoring programs, all aimed at saying, there is a hopeful future; a future where you don't have to adhere to violence; a future where radicalism is not in your sights; a future where peace is possible.

And so we're proud you're here in America. We want to thank you for your commitment to living side by side with Israel in peace. You have a friend here in the United States to help you achieve this objective.

And I want to thank my fellow citizens for being so spirited that you're willing to take time out of your busy lives to help this young democracy get up on its feet and eventually lead the peace that we all are so hopeful for.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Walter Isaacson, president and chief executive officer, Aspen Institute.

Message on the Observance of Hanukkah 2007

December 3, 2007

I send greetings to all those celebrating Hanukkah, the festival of lights.

Hanukkah commemorates a victory for freedom and the courage and faith that made it possible. More than 2,000 years ago, the land of ancient Israel was conquered, its sacred Temple was desecrated, and the Jewish people were forbidden to practice their faith. A patriot named Judah Maccabee and his followers rose up against their oppressors to take back Jerusalem. When the Maccabees returned to reclaim and purify their Holy Temple, the oil used for dedication should have lasted only one day but burned for eight. Every year since then, Jews have celebrated this victory of light over darkness and given thanks for the presence of a just and loving God.

As Jewish Americans prepare to light the Hanukkah candles, we are reminded of the many blessings in our lives. The candles' glow has the power to lift our souls, put hope in our hearts, and make our Nation a more compassionate and peaceful place. We pray that those who still live in the darkness of